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Photo Courtesy of Kenton County Library

In 1791 Thomas Kennedy, his wife Dinah, and their three children crossed the Allegheny Mountains, secured a raft, and ventured down the Ohio River in search of a new home. A few weeks later, as the craft floated past the mouth of the Licking River and arrived at what was then the tiny village of Cincinnati, Thomas ended their journey. He grounded the vessel on the southern side of the river near a clearing and decided that it was there that the family would reside.

He purchased over two hundred acres of farmland, which had already been surveyed by Stephen Trigg, from its owner James Welch, for a little less than seven hundred and fifty dollars. Once having proper title to the land in his possession, Thomas proceeded to construct a log cabin and prepared to go into business.

In 1792, the year in which Kentucky officially became a state, he established the first commerical ferry on the Ohio River. Thomas operated the Kentucky side of the river, and his brother Francis, who had arrived in Cincinnati a few months earlier, worked the Ohio side. The ferry, which was located near the end of present day Garrard Street, was very successful as there was much travel across the river at that point.

In 1794 Kennedy was granted a license to sell liquor in his home. That, coupled with the profits from his ferry business, soon made him a rather wealthy man. Also that year, he was elected a member of the first Campbell County Court.

Twelve years later, in 1806, Thomas Kennedy was granted permission to establish and operate another ferry across the Licking River. Rates for this ferry were one and one-half cents for small livestock, six and one-fourth cents for people or cattle, twelve and one-half cents for a man on horseback, and fifty cents for a team and wagon.

On November 17, 1812, Thomas advertised the majority of his property for sale. Soon thereafter the land was purchased for the sum of \$50,000 by the Covington Company which consisted of General John Stites Gano, Richard Montgomery Gano, and Thomas Davis Carneal. Three years later, on February 2, 1815, the Kennedy farm officially became the town of Covington.

On August 21, 1821, Thomas Kennedy died and was buried in Linden Grove Cemetery. He willed the remainder of his estate to the heirs of his daughter Hannah Porter (then deceased), and to his sons, Joseph and Samuel.

The Kennedy house was built in the early 1700's replacing the log cabin which Thomas built upon his arrival. The entire house was made of stone, and was the first of its kind in the area. The outer walls of the home were three feet thick. Inside the house was a broad stairway and the entire interior displayed beautifully detailed woodwork. The original estate included the house, a barn, a springhouse, a hen house, and a smokehouse — all of which were made of stone. The house no longer exists but its location is noted by a marker in the George Rogers Clark Park on Riverside Drive.